

### Observation, Concentration, Imagination & Sense Recall

One of the purposes of this course is to help you become a more creative and imaginative person both on stage and in real life. Creative imagination isn't just relegated to the theatre it can be utilized anywhere from cooking to fly-tieing; and from advertising to electronics.

Not everyone has a creative imagination. Some people have never bothered to develop their creative powers. Consequently they lack the joy and excitement that comes from being resourceful.

Creative people are vividly aware of their environment. They store within vast numbers of ideas and plans. Creative people tend to be more interesting and resourceful persons in many walks of life -not just artistic.

Can creativity and imagination be taught. Like any skill it can be nurtured and strengthened by working on such areas as observation, concentration and sense recall.

#### Observation

As actors it is our business to portray human beings on stage as realistically as possible. None of us possesses enough personal experience to believably play all types of people on stage. It is necessary for us to strengthen our observation skills so that we may build up a repertoire of characters that we may draw from.

You must learn to observe how various people think, feel and behave. You must notice the difference in movements from the very old to the very young. So many of us have eyes which 'see not'; and ears which 'hear not'.

How observant are you? Can you immediately recall the colour for your best friend's eyes? What was your mother wearing this morning before you left the house? If your goal is to excel as an actor you must increase your observation skills ten fold!

As you work on developing your power of observation, keep in mind the actor's goals: accuracy and selectivity. Scrutinize what you see so that your memory of the person, scene, or action will be vivid and true. If your part calls for you to play a ukulele you must appear to do so convincingly. If you don't know how to handle the instrument, your actions will not be believable and you will lose your audience.

In addition to being accurate, you must be selective. Decide what actions can be used on stage. Retain those actions and dismiss the others.

In working on Observation try looking at your life in a whole new way. Look at your neighbourhood as though you were a foreign visitor seeing it for the first time. Listen to the world around you. Become more aware of the fragrances and odours you encounter. Store everything in you memory for use in future characterizations.

### Experiments in Observation

#### Experiment #1 - "News Video"

Watch the short video clips on various news stories. Be extremely attentive to as much detail as you can possibly soak in. Watch it twice. Answer the following questions in your binder. Correct as a class and gather reactions.

1. What object was in front of the open door as the policeman approached the building?
2. In what hand was the policeman holding the gun?
3. Which foot was closest to the door before he entered the building?
4. How many policemen were in the building in the final shot?
5. How did the policeman hold his gun once in the building?
6. What was the name of the volcano?
7. What vehicle type drove through the ash-clouded streets of the town?
8. What number was the baseball player who was ejected from the game?
9. In what way did the baseball player physically demonstrate his anger?
10. What number was on the left of the pilot's uniform?
11. What colour was his uniform?
12. What colour was his helmet?
13. What was the name of the airplane stunt team?
14. How many planes (at their highest number) flew in formation?
15. In what direction of the screen where the planes flying in the final part of the segment?



## Experiment #2 - "The Outsiders - Scene 1"

Here is a movie that most teenagers are familiar with, S.E. Hinton's The Outsiders. The scene is the corner of Picket and Sutton as the tragic tale of Greasers vs. Socs begins. Watch the scene once and then ask the questions orally to the class. How observant were they? Mark their responses and discuss.

1. What is the very first thing that Dallas Winston does?
2. In the opening shot, what does the largest of the neon signs say on the brick building?
3. The first car to drive by in this scene is predominately what colour?
4. How much was a "Hamburger Deluxe & Coleslaw"?
5. In which hand does Dallas hold his cigarette?
6. How many of the 3 Greasers had their arms covered?
7. A girl walks past the 3 Greasers, describe her skirt.
8. What was the speed limit on the main street?
9. Name the restaurant the Greasers walked to?
10. Which of the 3 major characters wore a necklace?
11. In the fight what colour jacket did the young Latino character wear?
12. Which hand did he hold his switch blade in?
13. Before the police arrive the camera pans by the license plate of a car. What state was the car from?
14. What was the colour of the police car?
15. Was the policeman clean shaven, bearded; or did he have sideburns or a moustache?
16. Name the Gas Station where Soda was working?
17. Dallas puts Johnny in a headlock with what arm?
18. When the 3 Greasers walk into the vacant lot how many kids are playing there?
19. What game does Dally ask if the children know how to play.
20. Who wore the denim jacket?

### There's Something Different About You!

So many of us look without ever seeing! Unbelievable but true. This exercise will test just how visual you really are!

1. Choose partners. Someone you don't know well.
2. Sit back-to-back immediately. If you can divide the two groups into two separate rooms where they can really change things about themselves.
3. You will be given 5 minutes to change 10 things about your appearance. You may change anything. Be creative and imaginative. Be abstract and sneaky. Your job is to totally stump your partner.
4. After 5 minutes turn around and face one another. One of the partners begins to try and list the 10 changes. Of course to list the changes they would have had to be extremely observant of that person prior to the exercise. Each person has 2 minutes to list their guesses.
5. Survey the class as to their successes. Any keen observers? Any really weak ones?

### Worrystone Pass!

Just how observant can you be in a crowd. How can you determine who is acting and who is not? See how your observant powers measure up to this exercise?

1. Ask someone to leave the room.
2. Give a worrystone to a member of the class.
3. Have everyone sit in a large circle.
4. Practise miming the passing of the worrystone from hand to hand - all about the circle.
5. Invite the individual back into the room. He/she may observe at length. Even at close range. Their goal is to determine who has the worrystone. If they can find it the stone is theirs.

### Who Started It?!

#### \* You need a stop watch

An extension of the above exercise. Once again the powers of observation come into play. This time the goal is determining who initiates an action within the group?

1. Send a volunteer into the hall.



2. Select a leader from the group. Everyone acknowledges the leader and will follow any movement or action they do.
3. Remind the students that their job is to stump the kid in the hall for as long as possible. To do so they must try not to draw attention to the leader. They must conceal him for as long as possible.
4. The exercise will be timed to determine who is the most observant in the classroom.

### Spirals

Many exercises overlap. This exercise will test not only your ability to observe but to cooperate as well.

1. Divide into 2 large groups. Form a line.
2. The person at the end of the line remains standing on the same spot. Everyone else must make a tight spiral around him like the workings of a watch.
3. Once the group is wound up like a clock spring, the person in the center ducks under everyone's arms - beginning with the closest - and tries to lead the group back into the original line.
4. No one can let go of hands for even a second.

### Knots

A similar game but one that pits an individual against a puzzle they did not see created.

1. Divide into 3 groups.
2. Ask someone from each group to leave the room.
3. Each group must form a line holding hands and without breaking. The goal is to get as tangled up in the most complicated manner possible.
4. Once the KNOT is made the individual is asked back into the room. Their goal is to UNKNOT the tangled mess.
5. No one in the group can speak, but they cannot hinder the process in any way. The student must physically move arms, legs or whatever in order to straighten out the knot and return the students to the original line.

### Mirror Exercises

These are some of the most classic of all theatre exercises in sharpening observation and concentration skills. Mirrors are as old as the dawn of time, when people gazed in wonder upon their reflections in pools of water. They looked into the still waters, not out of vanity, but to view their fate. For example, if the image was distorted by ripples, it was taken as a portent of evil. Primitive men and women imagined that the picture they saw was not the reflection of a personal image but of the very soul. They thought the soul could detach itself and have an independent existence. If the mirror were broken, the soul too could be shattered.

These exercises promote a heightened sense of timing and working closely together in pairs and groups. When people take their time to make the exercises work, a beautiful rhythm becomes evident along with a sense of genuine, harmonious contact and cooperation.

#### Mirror A

1. Divide into pairs of A and B. Sit closely together and look directly into your partner's eyes.
2. Lock into a gaze for at least 10 seconds until you feel comfortable.
3. Partner A initiates slow movements of facial expressions. Partner B imitates them exactly.
4. B is the mirror and must reflect exactly all of A's movements and facial expressions.
5. Observe! Examine specific parts of the face while taking turns being the initiator and the reflector. Observe the brows in motion . . . the expressions of the mouth . . . the hair line . . . the eyes.

#### Mirror B

1. Once you have become fairly comfortable as a team you will be asked to reflect various emotions.
2. anger, surprise, worry, fright, happiness, sadness, love

#### Mirror C

1. Still sitting directly across from one another commence movement of the upper body under various circumstances. Make everything extremely slow.
2. underwater tank, eating a peanut butter sandwich, peeling and eating an orange, moulding an imaginary object from clay, putting on makeup, shaving, squeezing a pimple, brushing your teeth, doing your hair, washing a mirror.



## Observation Assignment

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

You are to read the essay Three Days to See by Helen Keller. Some of the ideas expressed by Miss Keller make us realize how much we take our senses for granted - especially those of sight and sound. Once you have read the essay answer the accompanying questions on loose-leaf. Attach your answers to this sheet and hand them in. Your work will be evaluated in the same manner as an open book test. You will have the entire period to work.

### Three Days to See

by

Helen Keller

Helen Keller, with the help of her teacher Anne Sullivan Macy overcame the twin disabilities of blindness and deafness. Once her mind established contact with the outside world, Helen Keller learned how to speak. In 1904, she graduated from Harvard University with high honours and proceeded to support herself by lecturing and writing. Always, she attempted to interest the public in the problems of the handicapped, and to encourage the disabled to overcome their difficulties, to whatever extent they could. Although Helen Keller has published several books, she is celebrated chiefly as a symbol of the strength and high courage of the human spirit.

1. Why should Helen Keller select young adulthood, rather than some other period of life, as the time when a person ought to experience temporary deafness and blindness?
2. Helen Keller has planned her programme for three days of sight with great care. Discuss the theme around which she has organized each day's viewing.
3. Miss Keller is astonished that her friend should have seen "nothing in particular" while walking in the woods. Is one justified, then, in concluding that her friend must be an unobservant person? Discuss in one well written paragraph.
4. Has Helen Keller included in her plans any sight which might not prove as rewarding as she thinks it would? Provide reasons for your example.
5. Why would the last 3 paragraphs of this essay lose much of their impact on a reader who did not know the author's name and some of her background? Discuss.
6. Point out 4 sentences where Miss Keller has made full use of her sense of touch.

VALUE /20



### Observation Production Piece

Choose a simple action that you can readily practice at home. Be sure that an object or property is involved. The following can be used for suggestions: making an omelette, scrubbing the floor, washing your hands, playing an instrument, cutting and serving cake, putting on gloves, dressing your feet, sawing a board, ironing a shirt, sewing on a button, filling your gas tank - any simple action that you can think of.

Your goal is to actually perform this activity for the class. While doing so you need to pay close attention to your movements and to their sequence. Think about putting on a coat for example!

First get the coat from the closet. Do you throw it over your head and slip the arms into the sleeves haphazardly, or do you first put in one arm and then the other? Note with what hand you hold the coat, what your initial action is, what arm is first thrust into the sleeve. Feel the weight of the coat. Notice the muscular effort involved in putting it on. Do you button the coat, or do you leave it open and push your hands into the pocket? Observe and then see what you do. - This isn't as easy as you think!

Take whatever action you intend to perform and break it into its component parts:

- A. The Preparation
- B. The Initial Movement
- C. The Following Action
- D. The Completion

Plan out your exercise to each minute detail. Think about each step carefully. Rehearse it at least 10 times. Make sure that you have captured the actual and necessary movements. Then get ready to perform it for the class.

### Instructor's Observation Rubric

1. Was the Pantomime accurate and believable?

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2. Movements well organized and clearly executed?

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3. Were the actions carefully examined and selected?

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**Observation Production Piece**  
**- Activity Sheet -**

**NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

Construct a neat, complete sentence outline on this sheet. Prior to your performance, remove this sheet from your Theatre Arts duotang and hand it to the instructor. You will be graded on your preparatory notes as well as your performance.

**Type of Activity**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Your Purpose**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Where the scene occurs (the setting)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Action - Outline step by step**

**I. Introduction (Preparation)**

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**II. Body (Initial Movement & Following Action)**

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**III. Conclusion (Completion of Activity)**

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**Observation Production Piece  
- Instructor's Critique -**

**INSTRUCTOR'S COMMENTS:**

**A. On prepared pantomime:**

**1. Action accurate and believable**

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**2. Movements well organized and clearly executed**

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**3. Believable action. Weight, volume, dimensions**

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**B. On preparation of performance**

**1. Clear organization of sections**

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**2. Evidence of Creativity and Imagination**

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**FINAL EVALUATION** \_\_\_\_\_